



Ambassadors in Action

www.chr.alberta.ca/ambassador

AUGUST 2008

10th Anniversary Edition

Greetings!

This edition of the *Ambassadors in Action* newsletter celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Ambassador Program! The program continues to play a key role in attracting talent to our organization. I am proud to be a part of the program and appreciate the opportunity to meet and work with Lead Ambassadors and Ambassadors from across the APS. Thank you for your commitment to the Ambassador Program and its success!



~ Kim Smith

Ambassador Program Coordinator, Alberta Corporate Human Resources

Message from the Public Service Commissioner



Congratulations to the Ambassador Program on 10 successful years! Since its launch in 1998, the Ambassador Program has been a key initiative for promoting the Government of Alberta as a positive career choice to prospective employees.

Ambassadors reach people at all stages of their career—from students and recent graduates, to experienced professionals—using their skills to promote the government as an employer of choice at career fairs and forums, class presentations, employer panels and more.

As proud members of the Alberta Public Service, Ambassadors play an important role in attracting new talent by sharing their career experiences, personalizing our organization, and recommending the Government of Alberta as a positive career choice.

It's my honour to thank the Alberta Public Service Ambassadors for their continued commitment to excellence and for proudly working together to build a stronger province. Best wishes for continued future success.

Warmest regards,

Ulysses Currie
Public Service Commissioner
Alberta Corporate Human Resources ◀



Message from the University of Alberta, Career and Placement Services Office

*Congratulations to the Government of Alberta's
Ambassador Program on your 10th anniversary!*



Your U of A Career Centre

It is through this program that the Government of Alberta is able to participate in many of the University of Alberta events in order to connect with U of A students and graduates. At CAPS, the U of A's Career Centre, we appreciate the time, energy and dedication of the Ambassadors. It is because of them that our students and graduates are able to learn about the variety of career opportunities and personal career journeys at the Government of Alberta. From the Ambassadors' participation in career forums - where students studying a particular discipline gather to hear from a panel of speakers who have graduated with a similar degree - to their involvement in our career fairs, students and graduates always appreciate the Government of Alberta's contributions.

Thank you and congratulations.

CAPS: Your U of A Career Centre ◀

Message from the University of Lethbridge, Career and Employment Services

Congratulations Ambassador Program!

*For 10 years of successful promotion
of opportunities with the Government of Alberta*

University of
Lethbridge



Since the inception of Career Fairs (1989) at the University of Lethbridge, Government of Alberta Departments and their Ambassadors have shared their knowledge and expertise with our students. Through your participation in on-campus events students have learned about the work environment, opportunities and requirements for the Alberta Public Service, all critical information to help them make informed career decisions.

We are always pleased to welcome Ambassadors to campus and appreciate your enthusiasm, professionalism and commitment to supporting our students and alumni. We're proud to have built strong relationships with many departments and look forward to many more years of collaboration. ◀



The Program

The Ambassador Program originated in 1998 as an initiative under the Corporate Human Resource Development (CHRD) strategy and supported the attracting and retaining employees priority. Currently, the Ambassador Program supports the Attracting priority of the Alberta Public Service Workforce Plan.

Ten years ago, the Alberta Public Service (APS) demographics suggested we needed a clear emphasis on attracting new graduates and experienced young people to the public service, and the Ambassador Program was a crucial piece for increasing the visibility of the APS as an employer of choice at educational institutions.

Today, demographic issues and a tight labour market continue to impact the attraction of talent to the APS. Although the primary target audience for the program has been post-secondary students, the program has broadened its outreach to include other target audiences such as professional associations, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, immigrants, high schools students, etc.

APS employees who enjoy what they are doing and want to share this enthusiasm with students and other prospective employees join the program and become Ambassadors. The Ambassador Program provides a venue for these employees to help raise the profile of the APS as an exciting and rewarding place to work.

Proudly Working Together

Ambassador Program
Coordinator

Lead Ambassador
Team



Ambassadors

Ambassador Program Coordinator (Alberta Corporate Human Resources)

- Manages the program to ensure it is running successfully; works closely with Lead Ambassadors to plan and implement specific strategies and initiatives, coordinates corporately sponsored events including orientation and professional development for Ambassadors.

Lead Ambassadors

- Each ministry has designated a Lead Ambassador.
- Primary role is communication and liaison between the Ambassador Program Coordinator, ministry Ambassadors, and the Human Resource Director; also involved in planning and implementing corporate and ministry specific initiatives.
- Main point of contact for Ambassadors; shares information about opportunities to participate and responds to questions Ambassadors may have.

(Continued on page 4)



Ambassadors

- Ministry employees who serve as Ambassadors for the APS.
- Extent of involvement depends on interests and availability.
- Participation may include attending career fairs; guest speaking; training new Ambassadors; developing relationships with student organizations, post-secondary placement offices, and high schools; mentoring a student; developing relationships with professional associations; and being a prospective employee contact.
- Participation may also be initiated by Ambassadors themselves who through the nature of their work are in contact with target labour markets.

For additional information, please check out the Ambassador Toolkit <http://www.chr.alberta.ca/Practitioners/?file=staff/ambassador/sec1/titlepage&cf=149>. ◀

From Then to Now...

Humble Beginnings...

By Dianne Blahun, Retired, Former Alberta Corporate Human Resources Employee

Thinking back 10 years, I remember a public service that had weathered significant and well-publicized downsizing initiatives, and that was ready to move forward in a positive way. A review of our demographics focused attention on the number of APS employees eligible to retire over the coming years, and the skills required to move us into the next century. Clearly, we had to strengthen our recruitment efforts and raise our profile with potential employees and various educational institutions.

I was thrilled to be given the opportunity to develop and launch the Ambassador Program because I believed so strongly in the calibre of APS employees and the interesting and challenging jobs we offered. The Program was part of the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy, which was a government-wide priority. Senior support from the Deputy Minister of Executive Council, Deputy Ministers and the Human Resource Directors' Council was a key factor in the Program's success, but it also meant that failure or mediocrity were not an option!

Deputy Ministers identified Ambassadors on behalf of their Ministries. Initially, there were some questions about who the Ambassadors should be, as recruitment was primarily considered an HR function. However, putting potential applicants in more direct contact with operational people would give us an edge over other employers that continued to rely on their professional recruiters.

An initial glance at the list of the first group of Ambassadors told me the Deputy Ministers had identified a tremendous group of "can-do" people. That was a bit daunting, as it was sometimes a challenge to manage their energy and enthusiasm while launching the program and securing invitations to participate in key events.

(Continued on page 5)



While the program was a constant learning experience, two events stand out in my mind. The first was a high school career fair I attended before the Ambassador program was officially launched. My booth was situated between a helicopter pilot and a radio personality. It was a lonely afternoon. Some of the teachers came to introduce students who were probably best-suited to basic administrative work. I left knowing we had an opportunity to accomplish great things.

There was a second early event that I considered a turning point. Being government, we were mindful of fiscal restraint and did our best to present a polished, professional image on a shoestring. We had some printed material and copies of *The Bulletin* which listed all our current job opportunities. Our office had some spare plastic bags left from another event, so we took them to this post-secondary career fair. The students were collecting piles of material from all the employers at the career fair, but we had the item most in demand – a bag for their stuff! Students lined up at our booth, and they were bringing friends. Most of them were pleasantly surprised to learn about our opportunities, and they appreciated receiving a copy of *The Bulletin*, as they could see we had “real” jobs. I feel that was the “real” launch of the Ambassador Program.

Following that event, we continued to build momentum, and we received more funding support for materials and displays. We were invited to more events. Students were beginning to seek us out, and their instructors began talking with us. Some of our Ambassadors were invited to make presentations in classrooms, and to serve as advisors in their respective professional associations and educational programs. In addition, these events provided opportunities for Ambassadors to meet and interact with other Ambassadors. While the program had an external focus, I feel it had a positive influence across the APS.

This was truly a “good news” story – to the credit of our program sponsors, and the dedicated people who stepped up to serve as Ambassadors. ◀

Growth and Participation

1998-1999	44 Ambassadors; 2 career fairs
2003-2004	170 Ambassadors; 13 career fairs; 11 career forums/presentations
2007-2008	412 Ambassadors; 23 career fairs; 9 career forums/presentations
August 2008	424 Ambassadors

Note: the numbers represent corporately coordinated initiatives and do not include ministry coordinated initiatives. ◀



The Ambassador Program Display: Supporting Ambassadors in their Role



Early Ambassador Program Display - Ambassadors Carmen Parent and Kerri Schlemko.

2004 Display - new recruitment advertising logo and tagline.



2004 Display - Ambassadors Christine Oness and Natasha Chai.

2007 Display - new Government of Alberta Jobs Website.



2007 Display - Ambassadors Brandie Moller and Sandy Henderson.

Note: Additional historical information and photos can be found in the Ambassadors in Action Newsletter Archive which dates back to 2002. <http://www.chr.alberta.ca/Practitioners/DocList826.cfm>. ◀



Ambassador Experiences...

A Ground Breaking Experience

By Chantal MacLean, Director, Corporate Development, Alberta Corporate Human Resources

It's hard to believe ten years have passed since the Ambassador Program first sprang to life in January 1999! The Alberta Public Service looked a lot different back then. It had just turned the page on a large downsizing initiative and was facing a demographics crunch with a large number of employees reaching retirement age. We had to take action to address our need to attract new graduates and renew our workforce.

Insights into students' future plans and career objectives came from a 1997 survey of Alberta university and college students. The survey revealed that overall students wanted to do interesting work and be able to apply their skills and expertise. They also wanted to be paid well and have opportunities for growth.

What was particularly striking from the survey was students' lack of knowledge of what the APS could offer. They had limited knowledge of the APS in general and believed that government was "constantly downsizing" or overly bureaucratic. Where students had some exposure to the APS, they felt the APS offered excellent benefits, competitive salaries and lots of opportunities for advancement. There was a lot of work to do to raise the profile of the APS as an employer of choice and help change students' perceptions of government work!

The Ambassador Program was key in unlocking the truth about what we could offer students. What better way to share our story than through our passionate and committed employees! The program began with 44 department Ambassadors. Since then, the program has grown considerably in size and scope and now has over 420 active department Ambassadors, participating in more than 25 corporately coordinated events per year.

Though the APS looks a lot different today than it did ten years ago, the Ambassador Program is still as relevant today as it was back then. We continue to face a number of the same issues today with over 25% of our workforce eligible to retire over the next 5 years. The need has become perhaps even more urgent given our highly competitive labour market and low level of unemployment in Alberta.

When I helped develop the Ambassador Program, I was an intern and had recently graduated university. I, like other recent grads, was looking for a chance to apply what I had learned in school, gain valuable "real-life" job experience and continue to learn and grow. My internship exceeded my expectations and I wanted to share my positive experience with others. Ten years later, I continue to be an Ambassador and am still proud to be an APS employee!

I don't think what students are looking for has significantly changed since the inception of the program. I believe students are still looking for challenging and interesting work, the chance to apply their skills and the chance to grow. We've come a long way in raising the profile of the APS with students, recent graduates and prospective employees. This is due in large part to the dedication, effort and positive contributions of our Ambassadors! ◀



A Rewarding Role

By Ken Murray, Property Management, Alberta Infrastructure

I volunteered for the Ambassador program a number of years ago because I thought it would be a good way to meet new people and try a new experience.

I am the only person in the program representing the 'trades' and I attend the Canada Career Week Fair and the annual Career Fair put on by SAIT. There is a huge demand for tradesmen in Alberta at present and for the foreseeable future. There are all kinds of questions from students, parents, teachers, and people making mid-life career choices. Most people inquire as to whether the 'trades' are a viable option for people not inclined for other professions.

I have found it very rewarding to share my experience with the other tradesmen and also promote the Alberta Government as an employer of choice. The 'trades' offer interesting work and very competitive pay. As the government is not a profit motivated company, the chance for on-the-job training is second to none and because we look after many different types of facilities there is a chance for varied experience; making for a well-rounded tradesperson. I've always felt fortunate that I went through my electrical apprenticeship on a government site and was trained in everything from data cabling to high voltage installations.

I'm happy to say that I've really enjoyed being an Ambassador. It's been interesting meeting clients; developing friendships, networking with other Ambassadors and learning about their occupations. I also value the friends I've made in the Aboriginal community and sharing in their traditions. I look forward to their workshops.

I would encourage others to consider becoming an Ambassador. What better way to meet people from all walks of life and share their experiences and hopes. ◀

What Can You Do with an Arts Degree?

By Paul Oss, Marketing and Research Specialist, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology

If you're an Arts grad like me, I'm sure at some point in your life you've had to endure the usual jobs, jokes and inevitable: What can you do with an Arts Degree?

It's not an easy question to answer, but in addition to being a more engaged citizen, many studies confirm that over the long haul, Arts grads actually do quite well. The skills Arts grads acquire—big-picture thinking, communication, research and writing—are advantageous in almost any job or line of work.

On January 24th, 2008, I had the pleasure of speaking to 80 psychology students at the University of Alberta. The event was organized by the Faculty of Arts and Career and Placement Services, and I was representing my department and the Government of Alberta as an Ambassador. As an Arts grad with a major in psychology myself, I looked forward to discussing my own experiences and how my unusual career path led me to my current position as a marketing and research specialist with the Learner Services Branch of Advanced Education and Technology.

Most students had one thought on their mind: what kind of job can I get when I graduate. I assured them that the great thing about an Arts degree is you can pursue many different paths based upon your own interests and skills. I worked for many years as a career counselor and then went back to school to get a Public Relations Diploma. I started my own communications business, and then got a position as an intern with the government.

It's understandable that with today's high cost of tuition that both parents and students are more focused on employment outcomes. However, as I mentioned to the students in my presentation, the skills I acquired as an Arts grad have served me well, not only in my career, but in the way I understand and interpret the world. Isn't that an equally worthwhile benefit of higher education? ◀



Opportunities for Ambassadors...

Orientation for New Ambassadors

Welcome new Ambassadors! Ambassadors who are new to their role or who were unable to attend the Orientation session held last September are invited to attend an Orientation Session for New Ambassadors.

The Orientation session will provide new Ambassadors with an overview of the Ambassador Program, the role of Ambassadors, and the Ambassador Toolkit. Resources available to support Ambassadors in their role of promoting the Alberta public service to prospective employees will also be highlighted. Learn how to prepare for career fairs and career forums!

Two orientations sessions are scheduled:

- Wednesday, September 3 from 1:00-4:30pm in Edmonton (attend the orientation in-person or via a simultaneous teleconference/webcast).
- Wednesday, September 10 from 1:00-4:30pm in Calgary.

How do I register? A detailed invitation that includes an online registration link was emailed to Ambassadors on July 10. Please register by August 22 using the following link: <http://www.chr.alberta.ca/registration/SignUp.cfm?Id=F811>. If you have any questions, please contact your Lead Ambassador or kim.smith@gov.ab.ca. ◀

Upcoming Career Fairs and Career Forums

Career fairs and career forums/presentations provide Ambassadors with opportunities to promote the diverse career opportunities and challenging and rewarding work that the Alberta public service has to offer.

The Ambassador Program corporately sponsors a number of career fairs to promote the APS as a whole and Ambassadors from various ministries participate in these fairs. Some ministries may have their own booths at the career fairs that meet their specific recruitment needs. Throughout the year a number of other corporate and ministry specific initiatives may come up in addition to the ones listed in this newsletter.

How do I participate? You will receive email invitations from your Lead Ambassador regarding upcoming Ambassador events. Please inform your Lead Ambassador of the ones that interest you and fit with your availability.

Note: An invitation to participate in the September to November events was sent to the Lead Ambassadors on July 10. An invitation to participate in the January to March events will be sent to Lead Ambassadors in November. ◀



Career Fairs Sponsored by the Ambassador Program for 2008-2009

Organization	Event	Date
University of Calgary	Careers Day	Monday, September 22/08
University of Alberta	Careers Day	Wednesday, September 24/08
University of Lethbridge	Career Day	Friday, September 26/08
The Career Show, Calgary	Career Fair	Friday, October 31/08 Saturday, November 1/08
Canada Career Week	Career Fair	Friday, November 14/08 Saturday, November 15/08
SAIT	Career Fair	Thursday, November 20, 2008
Red Deer College	Employer of the Week Spotlight	September – November, 2008 or January – March 2009, TBA
NAIT (General)	Career Fair	Tuesday, January 27, 2009
University of Alberta	Summer Job Fair	Thursday, February 5/09
SAIT/Chinook Lodge	Education & Career Expo	February 2009, TBA
University of Calgary	Career & Job Expo	Tuesday, February 10/09
Concordia University College of Alberta	Career Fair	Wednesday, February 25, 2009
Mount Royal College	Career Fair	March 2009, TBA
King's University College	Career Fair (Business Students)	March 2009, TBA
NAIT (JR Shaw School of Business)	Career Fair	March 2009, TBA
NAIT (Computer Systems Technology)	Career Fair	March 2009, TBA

University of Alberta Career Forums 2008-2009 — Fall Term

Area of Study	Date	Time
Electrical and Computer Engineering	Tuesday, September 30/08	5:30 to 7:30 pm
Alternative Careers for Education Students	Wednesday, October 1/08	5:00 to 7:00 pm
Civil and Environmental Engineering	Thursday, October 2/08	5:30 to 7:30 pm
Sociology	Tuesday, October 7/08	5:00 to 7:00 pm
History	Thursday, October 9/08	4:00 to 6:00 pm
Careers in French	Wednesday, October 22/08	5:30 to 7:30 pm
Occupational Therapy	Thursday, October 30/08	5:00 to 7:00 pm
Criminology	Tuesday, November 4/08	4:00 to 6:00 pm
Careers in Rehabilitative Medicine	Fall 2008	TBA
Environmental Biology	Fall 2008	TBA
Mining and Petroleum Engineering	Fall 2008	TBA
Music	Fall 2008	TBA
Religious Studies	Fall 2008	TBA
Retail Studies	Fall 2008	TBA

For list updates, please visit the University of Alberta / Career and Placement Services website:
http://www.ualberta.ca/CAPS/CaPS_a5-1-1.html ◀



Did you know?

The *Ambassador Toolkit* has been updated. Check it out at www.chr.alberta.ca/ambassador.

The *Government of Alberta Jobs website* www.jobs.alberta.ca supports Ambassadors in their efforts to attract talent to the GoA. It houses a number of resources which provide useful information for prospective employees. Check out the following resources under the “*Explore the Possibilities*” tab:

- ***Ask Our Employees*** video profiles – showcase the diversity of employment options, and highlight what a career with the government has to offer and the positive work environment.
- ***Research Careers and Calculate Pay & Benefits*** tool – provides an interactive resource for researching the diverse career options, levels of work, required qualifications and the associated pay and benefits.
- ***Map Out Your Career*** video – showcases the diversity of work and work locations throughout the province, and what the GoA has to offer as an employer.
- ***Your Internship: Turning Education Into Careers*** video – showcases internships and opportunities for recent graduates to build a career with the GoA.

In addition, the “*Students and Graduates*” tab provides information on:

- Opportunities for students including the ***Student Summer Employment Registration Service***.
- Opportunities for graduates including ***Internship Programs***. ◀

We Want to Hear From You!

We're interested in your thoughts and ideas! If you have suggestions for the Ambassador Program, feedback on the newsletter, and/or if you would like to contribute an article, please contact Kim Smith, Ambassador Program Coordinator, at kim.smith@gov.ab.ca.

The next edition of the Ambassadors in Action Newsletter will be published in April 2009. ◀

